

# Spinning Shakespeare

By Don Rubin

The Yiddish term is *mishagas*. Crazy. As in “believing that Shakespeare didn’t write Shakespeare is *mishagas*. Crazy.” Then they point at you, roll their eyes in a what-can-you-do-with-him kind of way. “We all know he’s a bit strange. We all know he is *mishuga*.”

Now I begin my paper with this very basic lesson in Yiddish – using a term that has transferred quite widely into common English usage – because it is a term too often applied to the Oxfordian cause or, at the very least, the cause which has led so many to have “reasonable doubt” that William of Stratford was actually the writer of the plays of Shake-speare (with or without a hyphen).

When I first came to this issue after reading Mark Anderson’s brilliant biography of Oxford, *Shakespeare By Another Name*, and followed this by reading as widely as I could in this fascinating area, I couldn’t help but notice that every time I tried to share my new enthusiasm with friends and colleagues I really could see their eyes start to roll and I could hear – whether they were Jewish or not – the word *mishagas* floating somewhere around them. “Oh my God,” they were thinking piteously, “he is crazy.” Sometimes it was innocent family members and sometimes distinguished scholars. But the fact was all seemed united in labeling me *mishugana*.

Like Queen Victoria, I was not amused. After more than forty years as an academic, a former Chair of a distinguished Department of Theatre at York University in Toronto, and co-founder and former Director of the MA and PhD Programs in Theatre Studies at York, I tended to take my scholarship – especially in theatre areas – rather seriously. What was going on here? Why, when I casually asked a colleague from the English Department if they had read this or that book about the authorship issue, would a look of incredulity spread across their face? Were they wondering if I was really one of *those people*? At parties they would immediately turn toward the bar as quickly as possible, passing on this disheartening conversation.

I realized quickly that speaking about the authorship question in academia was not a good career move; it would be death, in fact, for younger faculty. The only reason I had survived was that I came to it so late in my academic career that I already had my tenure to keep me safe and warm. This was a comfort not shared by a young colleague at another Canadian university whose graduate work was severely undermined

when he tried to invite a distinguished Oxfordian, Roger Stritmatter to speak at an international Shakespeare conference that he was helping to plan. I won't bore you with the details because that unidentified young colleague – Sky Gilbert – has already written about it rather satirically in his own outrageous post-post-modern satire, a novelistic musing on universities called *Come Back*, a novel which features a 138-year old Judy Garland returning to university to do a dissertation on a gay Canadian theatre director whose life and academic career was destroyed because of his Oxfordian leanings. In Old Testament vernacular, one could say it was the young scholar's *mishugas* which actually did him in, and helped to destroy his not-yet established academic credibility.

What I am trying to say is simply this: whether we are reasonable doubters or full-fledged Oxfordians, it does not help our intellectual pursuits to be labelled in such a way. Whether it's the well-worn phrase "conspiracy theorist" or simply the downtown notion of *mishuganah* – the idea that we who doubt, we who believe in the reality of the Other are somehow out of touch with reality is not one that most of us are, or should be, comfortable with. We live with it, of course. Some of us even take pride in it as independent thinkers. But it starts us off in almost every conversation on the defensive and it is often hard work to get back to neutral with people we really want to share ideas with. How wonderful it would be if we could lose the rolling eyes of colleagues and even friends when this subject comes up. It is this which most bothers me and is at the core of what I call "Spinning Shakespeare."

What I am suggesting is: perhaps it is **we** who may be using the wrong words somehow, perhaps it is **we** who are creating unnecessary and irritating impressions when we bring up our favourite Earl. Perhaps there are better ways we can get into the subject, better ways to spin Shake-speare (with or without the hyphen), better ways to spin the entire authorship issue. Which is to say that I am not yet personally prepared to argue arcane issues of re-dating or the life of either the man from Stratford or de Vere

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or the sonnets (whether they should be read backwards or forwards) or Will's will, or whether there was a sycamore tree in Italy, no matter how crucial they are. I must, for now, leave such stuff to better-versed colleagues whose work has taught me much, colleagues such as Mark Anderson, Roger Stritmatter, Hank Whittemore, and Bonner Cutting. Their first-rate scholarly research has been truly impressive.

For the moment I want to concentrate on what is almost a public relations issue for Oxfordians: how to get the authorship issue taken seriously in both the academic world and in the wider sphere. Need I say that not even *Anonymous* – that most expensive attempt to popularize the issue – managed to break the authorship issue away from the infernal rolling-eye syndrome that we are rather frustrated by. Is it simply “correctness” and “truth” that we need to proclaim, or is it correctness, truth, and a particular use of words, words, words that are the real key here? If it is the latter, what words might be better to establish real debate with the world when we depart from our protected enclaves? What words should we use to get our Will more effectively into the world? Even as an academic – perhaps I should say especially as an academic – I have had to learn to dance my own Oxford dance in quite specific ways even to be heard, have had to learn to “spin” my Shakespeare carefully. Doing so, I have found, is often hard and frustrating, but it is work I suggest that can pay off ultimately with increased credibility.

Let me go right to it here. Conspiracy is not the word we want associated with our approaches to the Great Shakespeare Mystery, the greatest mystery in the history of world theatre. Conspiracy, of course, in and of itself need not be construed as negative. The word simply means to breathe together, to share an idea. But the whole notion of conspiracy also suggests secrets, the bizarre and perhaps the beastly, implies plotting and plotters who choose to work away from the mainstream, who choose darkness over light. Such people, we all know, are not to be trusted, are suspicious in every sense of the word. Do we really want Oxford in that company?

Given that, as we all know, **we** are the ones working with facts in this area and that the so-called orthodox are the ones working with fantasy, the labels and the arguments should be easy to turn around but because the argument of the Other is faith-based, is religious in tone, it turns out not to be so easy and we continue to be the ones always under scrutiny. How can we turn this around?

My own academic experience in this regard may be useful here. A few years ago, I managed, after some struggle at my university, to get a course on the books – officially a one-off experimental course – on Oxford as Shakespeare. And that working concept immediately became an issue. Why? In the academic world one cannot start with a conclusion. “Oxford as Shakespeare” is a conclusion. One has to pose a question within a university and explore it from as many points-of-view as possible. That is, one needs to pose questions in spinning Shakespeare rather than attacking head-on.

But back to the course. In order to create any new course, a faculty member must make a proposal on paper to colleagues. The proposal has to include a title, an overview and justification, an outline of what will be covered, and a bibliography. Each new course needs initial approval from the area involved (in this case from my colleagues in Theatre Studies), approval from a Departmental Curriculum Committee, then approval from the Department as a whole, then approval from a Faculty-wide Curriculum Committee, and ultimately, approval from the university Senate's Curriculum Committee.

Let me say that the most difficult approval, the most debated part of the process was the most local, my own theatre colleagues, none of whom seemed to have ever really explored the issue but all of whom seemed to have pretty much rejected it. One said she wanted simply to believe in genius. Didn't I believe in genius? Another, a distinguished former English Department professor, now in my area, led the intellectual charge against the course. He had been teaching a traditional Shakespeare course for years and was mightily offended. Born in England, he was also personally irritated that I – a mere colonial – was questioning the wisdom of the ages. This course proposal challenged his faith, his belief system.

As I listened to him, I could hear him saying five hundred years ago, "Of course the sun moves around the earth. The Church has told us so. And surely the Church wouldn't lie." He clearly did not wish to challenge orthodoxy. Could everything that he had ever been taught about the man from Stratford have been wrong? And how about the First Folio? Was everyone lying? Well, let's not get into that here.

His attack on the new course was built at that moment on Shapiro's *Contested Will* which had been published a few months before. I gave him a copy of *Shakespeare By Another Name*. To his credit, he read it and his unshakeable faith was, I think, slightly shaken. After extensive argument, he concluded by saying that at most, the authorship issue should be no more than a day-long debate between "real Shakespeareans" and those who believed in "conspiracy theories." His final argument was that if such a course was offered, no one would sign up for it. "You'll be lucky to have a half-dozen students," he said.

To be fair, I must say that other colleagues in the Theatre Department were at least curious. None had ever gone into the authorship issue with any depth and, though not deeply interested one way or the other, they saw the course as an opportunity to actively learn more about it – a debate between the arguments posed by Anderson's book and Shapiro's.

I was asked to prepare a course outline for the committees to examine. Certainly, my first instinct was simply to do a course on Oxford as Shakespeare. But given the battle-lines and the arguments against it, I understood that I needed to lower the temperature. It must not be Oxford as Shakespeare but rather a genuine intellectual look

at the authorship question as a whole. When I changed the title of the course from “Oxford and Shakespeare” to “Shakespeare: The Authorship Question” most of the academic guns lined up against me were lowered. When I suggested that the students would explore a variety of authorship candidates (including William of Stratford) the opposition softened further.

When I said I would actually include Shapiro’s book along with Anderson’s, when I agreed to include the opposition, victory was assured. Shapiro – though his orthodox point-of-view is obvious – does provide some useful background on the many challengers. The students could see at least two sides. And that was the key. I would let them look at several sides of the issue. Let them decide for themselves after the evidence was presented. I had confidence in it. Let the debate begin. I offered to conclude the course with that same day-long conference on the authorship question that I hoped would be highlighted by a keynote speaker, Mark Anderson himself.

The course was finally approved as a fourth-year elective at the area and departmental levels, again with some further complaints by my English Department colleague. I knew I had achieved a victory of some sort at that time, however, when I read a book review he’d written for a Canadian journal that referred, not to “Shakespeare” as the author of the plays but rather to “the entity that was called Shakespeare” as the author of the plays. So, he had read the Anderson book. A breakthrough at last.

In its final form, Theatre 4270: Shakespeare: The Authorship Question was to be a one-semester course offered by the Theatre Department and open to any senior student. It would be offered on an experimental basis in the winter semester (January to April) of 2012. I cautiously limited enrollment to fifteen to ensure that I wouldn’t be embarrassed if the registration was low. I didn’t want it cancelled for low registration. The department required a minimum of ten in an undergraduate course. I needn’t have worried. Through a combination of subject matter and my own reputation for stirring the pot, the fifteen places were snapped up almost immediately. The department started a waiting list. Eventually it went to twenty and then twenty-five. Thirty students showed up the first day including a doctoral student from India who asked if she could simply audit the class because Shakespeare was her passion as an undergraduate. Twenty-five completed the course.

What did it cover?

I’m sure everyone reading this would have their own ideas about how to fill 36 class contact hours for a course called “Shakespeare: The Authorship Question.” I did it with a combination of lectures, discussions of specific readings, and videos that I thought would bring the material to life for a group of mostly twenty and twenty-one year old theatre students. Interestingly, the course also had attracted attention from outside the department and though more than two-thirds of the students were

from Theatre, the other third came from departments such as English (even though two students told me they were warned not to take the course by professors), from Psychology, Education and even Nursing. All were just plain curious. None said they were taking the course simply to fulfill a requirement, though it did that for many.

I spent the first class on the authorship question giving a lecture entitled “Exactly What Is the Question” in which I discussed the general issue of Shakespearean authorship including its history, its value to scholarship, and the parameters of what we would be looking at. I pointed out that we, of course, know that there is a body of work (including plays and sonnets and other poetry) written under the name Shakespeare (in some cases with a hyphen, a sign then of pseudonymous creation). I assured them that there was no issue there. I then pointed out there was also someone named Will Shakspere, son of an illiterate glover from Stratford who was married to an illiterate wife and who fathered illiterate children. I added that he may not have been literate himself.

I informed them that it was this man of dubious background, this man called Shakspere and not Shakespeare, this man who never seemed to have travelled outside of the Stratford and London areas who has been traditionally given credit for being the greatest writer who ever lived. The fact that he never personally claimed credit nor seemed to have had either the background or the knowledge or even a book or manuscript of Shakespeare’s (or anyone else) to pass on in his will, made his being credited as Shakespeare just a might curious. I ran through the facts of William of Stratford’s life as we know them, spoke about the dysfunctionality of the Elizabethan Court (Mark Anderson has compared it to the North Korean court of Kim Jong-Il), spoke about contrarian views, reasons for anonymity, and about the period generally.

My goal here was less to convince or conclude the argument than it was to open their minds to possibilities, to excite the curiosity of the students to the plays and the time and the mystery. They were excited by the Helen Mirren/Jeremy Irons film, *Elizabeth I*, which gave them a remarkably strong sense of the time and the political machinations of the court.

The next several classes were devoted to essentially doing a Looney on the sonnets. That is, each student was assigned about five sonnets and was asked to build a life of the person who might have written them. Was it a male life or female? Was it a young person or old? Handsome or not? Rich or not? We paralleled this exercise over two weeks with Course Kit readings that I had put together. These included Tanya Cooper’s standard “Chronology of Shakespeare’s Life” (obviously a provocative chronology of William of Stratford’s dates) and Stanley Wells’ orthodox chronology of the dates of composition of the sonnets and plays. There were also brief student presentations on Henry VIII, Elizabeth and Robert Dudley, and a short reading from Hank Whittemore’s *The Monument*.

We then moved on to a reading of *Venus and Adonis*, a long excerpt from Bill Bryson's *In Search of William Shakespeare*, and a longer excerpt from Looney's *Shakespeare Identified*. This was followed by student presentations on Elizabethan boy companies and videos on Tudor courts and Shakespeare and his theatre.

We spent the next several weeks looking at the First Folio and the possible interpretations of the introductory material including the Droeshout etching and interpretations of Jonson's praise poem *To the memory of my beloved, The Author MR. WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: and what he hath left us*. As well, we looked at the lives of some of the less-recognized authorship candidates. These were chosen and presented by the students themselves and included ten-minute introductions on Queen Elizabeth as candidate (conclusion "no"), Mary Sidney as candidate ("maybe" but probably not), the Earls of Rutland and Derby ("probably not to be taken seriously"). As we moved further into the lives of other candidates, we also read Mark Twain's *Is Shakespeare Dead* (they loved it) and much of *Contested Will* (conclusion: Shapiro is biased in his presentations but provides some important biographical information). We also looked at Whitman, James, and Freud on the subject.

Things got exciting around this time when four of the advanced theatre students in the class presented an introduction on Marlowe arguing that *he* had to have been the author. Indeed, the class seemed to be divided at this point into three quite vocal groups: (1) the Marlovians, (2) those who believed passionately that William of Stratford could not possibly have written the plays but who were not really sure who had, and (3) those who were either genuine doubters or were genuinely baffled by it all.

A student introduction to Francis Bacon elicited some interest but not a lot of enthusiasm (except about how hard-done-by Delia Bacon had been as a 19<sup>th</sup> century female scholar) while the mystery aspect continued to fascinate them as I did my best to move the Elizabethan earth beneath their contemporary feet.

I did do one thing rather out of the ordinary here. I asked several of the students to do an introduction on John Florio as candidate. I am sure many of you will be raising your eyebrows in puzzlement here and I did myself when I first started looking into Florio. In fact, there is huge circumstantial evidence of a direct connection between the two men – Shakespeare certainly knew Florio's work though there is no record that the two ever crossed paths, not a surprise if you believe Florio was Shakespeare. But as filled with doubt as I was some years back, I must confess to having fallen under the spell of a delightful Italian-Canadian editor-writer and sometimes-scholar named Lamberto Tassinari. Born in Italy and achieving a reputation as a cultural journalist there, Tassinari later moved to Montreal where he edited a cultural magazine and began to research Florio.

Tassinari comes to his work from a purely Italian point-of-view, a view which explains Shakespeare's obsessions with Italy, with Italian literature and Italian theatre

forms and, as Tassinari has written, with themes involving religion, travel, exile, and disguise. His 2009 book, *John Florio: The Man Who Was Shakespeare* was the first serious examination of Florio in some 75 years and though it is more speculative than scholarly, it nevertheless asks some fascinating questions that should enter into the authorship debate. Did Oxford and Florio have contact? How much? When? Because the students were able to reach Tassinari in Montreal and see his son's three-minute musical Florio "rap" on YouTube, a new candidate emerged with a Canadian inflection.

The last third of the course was spent reading and debating *Shakespeare By Another Name*, a book which excited the students and gave a real focus to the final discussions on the subject. It was at this late point in the course that Bonner Cutting came to the class. She offered her time – and I could not have been more delighted to accept. She gave a brilliant lecture on Will's will, proving what real academic research is all about to these senior students, while heavily closing the case on William of Stratford as the greatest writer who ever lived.

I ended the formal part of the course with an in-class showing of Roland Emmerich's *Anonymous*. Most had already seen it by this time so a second viewing for them was useful in honing arguments for the final class. On that final day, the class was broken into six groups of about four students with each group having to argue for (and briefly against) a particular candidate or position. These final presentations were interesting and were done in place of a final exam. Some of these position presentations were offered as lectures, others as debates, as newscasts and one as a television documentary. The authorship candidates chosen by the students and positions argued included Marlowe, Bacon, Florio, de Vere, William of Stratford, and a final argument by one group which felt that the plays were collectively written by several authors.

That would normally have been the end of the course but I knew I still had one debt to pay. I needed to host that day-long conference on the authorship issue because I had promised that to my English Department colleague, the one who had caused me so much grief in the beginning. On April 7<sup>th</sup> – the Saturday between Good Friday and Easter Sunday as well as one of the first days of Passover – that Conference took place at York University and attracted (despite all those holy days) close to eighty people from across North America.

The fee was kept intentionally low and included a light lunch, coffee, and soft drinks. I was even able to generate modest funding at that point from a half-dozen different colleges on the York campus, from the English Department (which was obviously feeling a bit guilty that they had badmouthed it all in the beginning), from the Theatre Department and a significant amount from the Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts who had early on told me that the film *Anonymous* had made her realize that

during the Elizabethan period art was political and the words of artists were taken seriously. “Your conference,” she told me, “will at least make everyone understand that.”

And it did. Mark Anderson came from Massachusetts to give a brilliant keynote address on why the authorship question still matters. Keir Cutler performed his delightful stage version of Twain’s *Is Shakespeare Dead*. We showed Derek Jacobi’s sixty-minute *The Shakespeare Conspiracy*. After lunch we had a fascinating panel debate which included a passionate defense of Florio by none other than Lamberto Tassinari (introduced by Michel Vais, Secretary-General of the Unesco-based International Association of Theatre Critics) and eloquent defenses of the Oxfordian position by Keir and Mark (including an attack on the academic world generally by Keir for failing to take the issue seriously). Additionally, there were two lively challenges from critic David Prosser – the former Literary Manager of the Stratford Festival of Canada and a Stratfordian who really didn’t find it all particularly convincing – and the distinguished York Professor Christopher Innes, another committed Stratfordian who argued that nothing had been proven and that *Anonymous* was inaccurate historically.

Which brings me back to my real point and my title: “Spinning Shakespeare.” How can we make the Oxfordian position, the anti-Stratford position, more acceptable and more accessible? Let me say here that even my students – who all acted as publicists for the end-of-year conference as they contacted high schools and universities, English Departments and Theatre Departments to invite them to the event – were shocked at the animosity they encountered as soon as the subject was broached by phone or in-person. Remember, these were not conspirators like us but rather university students curious about controversial ideas. But to those they were calling – high school and university English teachers mostly – the callers were perceived as infidels, unbelievers who needed to be put in their places. Perhaps that was the greatest learning experience for my students, and they spoke about it at the conference.

I suppose what all of us came to understand was that to interest the uninitiated, to bring the larger world into the authorship conversation, the subject needs to be presented in a way that is both accessible and will not threaten the modest knowledge someone might already have. That is, one must open the debate by not directly attacking the personage that is accepted traditionally as the Bard of Avon. I believe this to be one of the failings of *Anonymous*. For all the good this film did in opening the debate to a wider public – and it was brilliant in cinematic terms – its portrayal of William of Stratford as a near-idiot as well as an egotistical money-grubber shaming the temple of theatre did not help the real argument and, in fact, it undermined the confidence of many about the film. Portraying someone they were taught to worship as God as a dunce, ridiculing a “religious” position, I suggest, turned people off. It is one thing to suggest Shakspeare might not have written the plays; it is another

er far more serious threat to call him an illiterate. The world stops listening at that point. That suggestion – if it comes from the Oxfordian side – has to come much later in the discussion, once people are brought in. Indeed, they may have to reach that conclusion themselves.

That is, pushing the negative is not the right spin. Our Shakespeare needs to be spun positively. I suggest people will buy that a whole lot more than an attack on their faith, no matter how dubious that rock's foundation may be. A greater sense of the real objective seems essential to get the argument into a more public context, on a more general basis, and into academe. When I first said I wanted to do a course which challenged William of Stratford as the author of Shakespeare's plays, no one was with me. But when I changed the language, when I spun it differently and said I wanted to do a course looking into arguments generally around the Shakespearean Authorship Question, a question that was becoming of wider and wider interest, given the number of books coming out on the subject, then even Shapiro could be used to make the argument for the course.

Every university likes to feel it is *au courant*, that it is relevant and cutting edge. Surely, given the number of books coming out every year on this issue, how can any university English or Theatre Department continue to ignore it? The authorship question, as early 21<sup>st</sup> century Twitterites would put it, is trending. We must let universities know that they ignore it at their intellectual risk today. That is the spin, the way to get other courses on the subject going at other universities around the world. That is also the way to get ourselves out of the world of conspiracies, of rolling eyes and *mishagas* and into the world of possibility. The Oxfordian position (and certainly the Reasonable Doubt position) – laid out properly and intelligently and without attacking the orthodox – can spin Shakespeare, our Shake-Speare, into the consciousness of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. And spinning Shakespeare in this way is, I believe, going to bring the true debate to the front of the church and will, finally, cast shame on the orthodox, the real *mishuganahs* in this greatest of all religious mysteries.

## Appendix A

*Many people have asked me for a copy of the official course outline so I offer it here. As any experienced teacher knows, it usually takes three iterations to get a new course right. The second time I taught this course, I built it around the presence in Toronto of the annual conference. That special occurrence pushed the second iteration totally out of normal academic shape but had real value for the students. I am about to teach the course for a third time. It will be different yet again. Hopefully it will come closer than either of the previous versions. I am determined to get it right. One final note. I was able to create a special Course Kit through the university bookstore (which obtained necessary permissions) containing excerpts and essays and other useful materials from many useful books and websites. I offer it here as well as an Appendix B.*

### Course Outline (York University, Toronto)

#### Shakespeare: The Authorship Question

##### Lecture One: “Exactly What is the Question?”

A discussion of the general issue of Shakespearean authorship including its history, value to scholarship, and parameters. Overview of what we know of WS, the will, the period, contrarian views, reasons for anonymity, Elizabeth and her court, the period in general.

**Video:** *Elizabeth I* (Helen Mirren/Jeremy Irons)

##### Lecture Two: “Building the Life from the Sonnets” (pt 1)

Read: Sonnets 1-75 and, in Course Kit, The First Folio (Title Pages, Dedication, introductory material by John Heminge and Henry Condell, and Ben Jonson); the Standard Chronology of Shakespeare’s life; Shakespeare’s Last Will and Testament; and Crowther’s 19<sup>th</sup> century introduction “Illustration of The Sonnets”

Student presentations: “The Sonnet: A Brief History” and “Henry VIII”

**Video:** *In Search of Shakespeare*

##### Lecture Three: “Building the Life from the Sonnets” (pt 2)

Read: Sonnets 76-154

Read: WS: Life Facts and Timeline; A Conjectural Chronology; Dedication to *Venus*

*and Adonis and The Rape of Lucrece*

Presentations: “Queen Elizabeth I” and “Robert Dudley”

### **Lecture Four: “Building the Life from Venus and Adonis”**

Read: *Venus and Adonis*, In Search of WS (Bryson); Shakespeare Identified (Thomas Looney); Shakespeare’s Signatures

Presentations: “Elizabethan Theatre” and “Boy Companies”

### **Lecture Five: “Other Lives: the Less-recognised Candidates”**

Presentations on Queen Elizabeth I (as a candidate), Mary Sidney, Earl of Rutland, and the Earl of Derby

Read: Remarks on the Life and Writings (Campbell)

### **Lecture Six: “Other Lives” (pt 2)**

Read: Mark Twain: *Is Shakespeare Dead?*; Looking for Shakespeare (Bethell and Matus); Shapiro (“Contested Will”)

Presentations: Marlowe, Freud (on Shakespeare), Twain (on Shakespeare), Whitman, Henry James, Ben Jonson, The Globe

**Video:** “Tudor and Stuart London Courts (1500-1668)” and “Shakespeare and his Theatre, the Globe”

### **Lecture Seven: “Other Lives” (pt 3)**

Presentations on Francis Bacon, Delia Bacon, Mark Rylance, Derek Jacobi

Read: Shapiro (on Delia Bacon)

**Video:** “The Shakespeare Conspiracy”

### **Lecture Eight: “The Italian Plays and the Evidence of Italy”**

Presentations: Shakespeare’s Italian Plays, John Florio, Edward de Vere

Reading: Mark Anderson: Chapters 1 to 5

### **Lecture Nine: Guest Lecture, Bonner Cutting, “The Will”**

Reading: Anderson: Chapters 6 to 11

## Lecture Ten: Watch “Anonymous” In Class

## Lecture Eleven: “So Who Really Wrote Shakespeare?”

Six 10-15 minute group presentations. Choose your group from this list:

- A. Marlowe and Jonson
- B. Francis Bacon
- C. John Florio
- D. Edward de Vere
- E. William of Stratford
- F. Group Written

One week later: term papers due (see Appendix C)

### **Required Books:**

- *Contested Will* (James Shapiro)
- *Shakespeare By Another Name* (Mark Anderson)
- *The Poems* (Shakespeare) includes The Sonnets (Penguin)
- Course Kit

## *Appendix B*

Material included in the required Course Kit:

1. Title Page and Dedication to *The First Folio*
2. Heminge and Condell: *Preface to the First Collection of Shakespeare's Plays*
3. Ben Jonson: Material from *The First Folio*
4. Standard Chronology of Shakespeare's Life (from *Searching for Shakespeare* by Tanya Cooper, Yale University Press, 2006)
5. Shakespeare: Life Facts and Timeline (from [www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespearefacts](http://www.william-shakespeare.info/william-shakespearefacts), 2005)
6. "A Conjectural Chronology of Shakespeare's Works" from "A Textual Companion" by Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor
7. "Is Shakespeare Dead" from *My Autobiography* by Mark Twain
8. "In Search of William Shakespeare" from *Shakespeare* by Bill Bryson (Harper-Collins, 2009)
9. "Remarks on the Life and Writings of William Shakespeare" by Thomas Campbell, from *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1838)
10. "Illustrations of 'The Sonnets,'" an essay by H. Crowther from *The Poetical Works of William Shakespeare* by H. Crowther, Boston: Phillips Sampson, 1851
11. Shakespeare's Signatures (Wikipedia)
12. "Relevance of the Shakspere Signatures" Deconstructed by Frank Davis from [www.shakespearefellowship.org](http://www.shakespearefellowship.org) (newsletter Vol. 45, No. 1)
13. The Last Will and Testament of William Shakespeare  
<[william-shakespeare.info](http://www.william-shakespeare.info)>
14. "*Shakespeare*" Identified by Thomas Looney (1920) reprinted in *The Great Shakespeare Hoax, Vol. I*, (Altrocchi and Whittemore, eds, IUniverse)
15. "Looking for Shakespeare" by Bethell and Matus (*The Atlantic*, Oct. 1991)
16. Declaration of Reasonable Doubt About the Identity of William Shakespeare <[DoubtAboutWill.org](http://DoubtAboutWill.org)>

## *Appendix C*

*Some student term paper topics coming from the course:*

“Marlowe as Shakespeare”

“Questions of Oxfordian Autobiography in the Plays of Shakespeare”

“Mary Sidney as Shakespeare”

“Codes in the Canon”

“Interpreting Hamlet From an Oxfordian Viewpoint”

“Shakespeare As Group Written”

“Critical Responses to the film *Anonymous*”

“The Authorship Question and Popular Fiction: *Chasing Shakespeare* and  
*Interred With Their Bones*”

“The Death of Marlowe”

“The Authorship Question and the High School English Curriculum”

“My Doubts Remain: A Personal Statement.”

*(Not all papers are included here because many were quite similar in content.)*



